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SUBJECT: COMOROS: FRANCE SUPPORTS MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ANJOUAN SHOULD NEED ARISE

REF: A. ANTANANARIVO 138

[¶](#)B. ANTANANARIVO 137

[¶](#)C. ANTANANARIVO 129

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).).

[¶](#)11. (C) SUMMARY: French MFA officials told us on February 20 that France would support military action by the Union of the Comoros to take control of Anjouan from Colonel Mohamed Bacar, should Bacar not heed the counsel of the multinational mission preparing to meet with and deliver to him an ultimatum urging cooperation. The French believe that this mission will take place on February 23 or shortly thereafter, and will include French participation. Our MFA contacts also confirmed that France would provide transportation assistance to Senegalese and Tanzanian units that may be involved in an offensive, as well as other logistical support, but that such support would not include assistance with troop landings at Anjouan or French participation in combat. END SUMMARY.

[¶](#)12. (C) MFA Comoros deskoff Jacques Biau and Madagascar deskoff Beatrice Lederle discussed the crisis in Comoros on February 20. They said that the GOF was highly engaged in the issue and shared what they understood to be the USG position concerning Anjouan and the possibility of AU-supported military action by the government of the Union of the Comoros. Biau noted that the multinational delegation headed by South African FM Dlamini-Zuma, in which France and the U.S. would participate, could travel to Anjouan on February 23 or soon after; he noted that the precise date had not yet been set (which Lederle said continued to be the case in a February 21 follow-up conversation).

[¶](#)13. (C) Ideally, Dlamini-Zuma's delegation would convince renegade Colonel Bacar to stand down, return to his senses, and agree to cooperate with the electoral process that he had previously helped sabotage, Biau said. He commented, however, that it was difficult to understand Bacar's motives and ultimate goals, given what Biau believed to be the long-term futility of his wanting to "control" Anjouan. Biau noted that Dlamini-Zuma's mission would not be to open some sort of negotiation with Bacar. Instead, he would be told that he had to cooperate, with no strings or pre-conditions attached.

[¶](#)14. (C) Should Dlamini-Zuma fail to convince Bacar, which seemed likely, Biau said that the Union government, with the international community's support, would have done everything possible to avoid a military confrontation, which the Union

government was nonetheless prepared to undertake. Biau said that France, although not desiring such a result, could accept a decision on the Union government's part to seize Anjouan militarily. Biau also took careful note that France believed a legal framework supporting the attack would be in place, first at the AU-level and then at the UN Security Council, where he believed that work was already in train to craft a resolution that would provide a mandate and legal basis for the attack and for those actively supporting it.

¶ 15. (C) Biau and Lederle confirmed press reports that France had been asked to provide assistance to the operation and that it had agreed to do so. This assistance would consist of transportation support for the Senegalese and Tanzanian units that would reportedly participate in the operation, and other logistical services. They said that France would try to play a "behind-the-scenes" role in moving troops among the islands but that in no case would France help land troops on Anjouan or participate in combat operations.

¶ 16. (C) Biau said that Anjouan's geography, which made beach landings difficult, favored a defender but that the two helicopters the Union government had acquired would significantly help the attack force. He said that the Union government forces numbered roughly 400 and he indicated that this did not include whatever Senegal and Tanzania would provide. Biau seemed confident that, with the two helicopters, the Union side would prevail.

¶ 17. (C) All that said, Biau regretted that it had all come to this. The Comoros was the last place that needed or deserved this kind of internecine conflict. He observed that various forms of EU and bilateral assistance had been arranged but were now blocked because of the Anjouan

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situation. France and the Comoros had signed, in 2006, a Partnership Framework Agreement for the 2006-2011 period, through which France was prepared to provide roughly 88 million euro. (NOTE: The Partnership Framework Agreement is the instrument France has used for the past several years to set forth and channel its foreign aid programs with recipient countries; each such agreement covers a five-year span and can be adjusted and fine-tuned to reflect changing circumstances over the life of the agreement. END NOTE.)

¶ 18. (C) Biau and Lederle said that France welcomed U.S. engagement in the Anjouan issue and that communications between the U.S. and French Embassies in Madagascar were excellent. They said that French officials involved in the Dlamini-Zuma mission looked forward to close cooperation with USG counterparts.

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